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EOEA and CZM co-sponsor Low Impact Development Conference

BOSTON – The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) will hold the first statewide conference on low impact development (LID) for the realty and development industry on Thursday, April 5, at the Sheraton Framingham.

As many as 300 developers, architects, landscape architects, consultants, realtors, local officials, and representatives of public agencies and non-profit organizations are expected to attend the conference, which is co-sponsored by the Environmental Business Council of New England, Home Builders Association of Massachusetts, National Association of Home Builders Research Center (NAHBRC), US Environmental Protection Agency - New England Office, The Green Roundtable, The Boston Society of Architects, and The Boston Society of Landscape Architects.

“Through Low Impact Development techniques, we can provide the homes and businesses Massachusetts needs in a manner that protects natural resources,” Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles said. “I am pleased to work with such a broad coalition of development and conservation groups to encourage municipalities and developers to adopt LID techniques.”

LID is a sustainable approach to land development, in which site planning focuses on preserving natural resources and maintaining the natural hydrology of a site. In conventional sprawl development, destruction of natural features and introduction of large impervious surfaces reduces infiltration of water into the ground – creating the need for structural storm water controls such as catch basins, pipes, and detention ponds to mitigate flooding.

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In contrast, LID preserves natural features, and reduces impervious surfaces and addresses storm water issues through thoughtful site planning and design techniques such as clustering, permeable surfacing materials, and bioretention – a method that utilizes natural vegetation to filter runoff. Natural drainage pathways and open space are preserved, and the overall impact from development is significantly reduced

Beyond environmental protection, LID provides extensive economic benefits. A recent NAHBRC publication noted that LID simultaneously lowers site infrastructure costs, protects the environment, and increases project marketability. By reducing impervious surfaces, disconnecting runoff pathways, and using in-site infiltration methods, builders can reduce or eliminate the need for costly storm water ponds, according to NAHBRC.

The April 5 conference, which begins at 7:30 a.m., includes sessions on: “What Developers Need to Know about LID - Benefits and Available Assistance,” “LID Site Design, Stormwater Management Practices, and Model Bylaw,” “Using LID to Meet Phase II Requirements,” “Green Buildings Guidelines and Energy Star/LEED,” and “The Cost of Conventional Development vs. LID.”

Attendees will also hear six urban and suburban LID case studies in Massachusetts, presented by project developers and design engineers. A Vendor Exhibit will feature innovative companies that have developed and/or designed effective LID technical guidance, cost analysis and outreach products; integrated and cost-effective LID technologies; and residential, municipal, or commercial projects that incorporate LID site design, storm water management, and water conservation. Kurt Gaertner, EOEА Director of Sustainable Development, and Andrea Cooper, EOEА-CZM Smart Growth Coordinator, will discuss how the Commonwealth is helping communities adopt LID policies and bylaws.

For more information, or to register as a sponsor, vendor, or attendee, please visit www.ebcne.org. Members of the media may attend free of charge.

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